



COMPARATIVE STUDY ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE BIMSTEC COUNTRIES, SAARC COUNTRIES AND THE WORLD WITH INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Human Development Index (HDI) is a procedure to estimate the value of the human resources of a particular country every year. Increased HDI value indicates the better development of the country. This paper reviewed and compared the HDI ranks and values between the BIMSTEC countries, SAARC countries and the World with India by using the secondary data. Indian HDI rank and value are lagging behind some of the BIMSTEC and SAARC countries and lower than World's average. Challenges of India to improve the HDI value and steps to be taken by the government, Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and other stake holders to increase the rank and value of HDI of India are discussed.

KEY WORDS: HDI, NGOs, BIMSTEC Countries, SAARC Countries, World, Human Resources.

Introduction:

With an abundance of empirical data and a new way of thinking about and measuring development, the Human Development Report has had a profound impact on policies around the world. HDI is a procedure to estimate the value of the human resources of a particular country every year. (<https://www.hdi.com>)

Human development index (HDI) is a composite statistical image of the human resources of a particular region regarding life expectancy, education, income and savings and about the growth rate. This method was created by a Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and by Indian economist Amartya Sen in the year 1990. Later it was published by United Nations Development Program. (<https://www.hdi.com>)

In recent decades, low- and middle-income countries such as Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba and China have succeeded in dramatically improving their citizens' health. The number of people living below the poverty line has also fallen significantly in many large countries such as China, India and Brazil. Within Africa, Ghana and Senegal halved their incidence of poverty between the mid-1990s and 2010. Furthermore, the highest rates of GDP growth over the past decade have been in East Asia (8%), South Asia (7%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (5%) — “the three regions which account for the bulk of absolute poverty” globally. (Indian times report 2014)

Brief on BIMSTEC:

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand brings together 1.5 billion people – 21% of the world population, and a combined GDP of over US\$ 2.5 trillion.

BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand - Economic Cooperation) was formed at a meeting in Jun 1997 in Bangkok. Myanmar was admitted in Dec 1997 and the organization was renamed as BIMST-EC. The grouping expanded when Nepal and Bhutan were admitted in Feb 2004. The grouping's name was changed to BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) at 1st Summit Meeting held in Bangkok in Jul 2004.

BIMSTEC organizes inter-governmental interactions through Summits, Ministerial Meetings, Senior Officials Meetings and Expert Group Meetings and through BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG) based in Bangkok. Summits and need based conferences will be hosted by one of the partner countries from time to time.

BIMSTEC has identified 14 priority areas where a member country takes lead. India is lead country for Transport & Communication, Tourism, Environment & Disaster Management and Counter Terrorism & Transnational Crime. Other priority areas like Trade & Investment, Cultural co-operation, Energy, Agriculture, Poverty Alleviation, Technology Transfer Exchange, Fisheries, Public Health, Climate Change are assigned to other BIMSTEC partner countries as the lead countries. (en.wikipedia.org)

About SAARC

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established on December 8, 1985 to organize and unite the governments of its seven original members: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to promote mutual progress and development.

Afghanistan later joined the SAARC in 2007 bringing the total number of members up to eight. There are also nine observer states: Australia, China, the European Union, Japan, Iran, Mauritius, Myanmar, South Korea, and the United States of America.

SAARC was founded as a movement toward collective progress for the involved nations of South Asia. The organization promoted political cooperation between these strategic nations for the mutual progression of the countries socially, economically, and culturally.

The idea for the SAARC was proposed on May 2, 1980, by Ziaur Rahman, the then President of Bangladesh. The founding countries met for the first time in April 1981 and then in 1985, they created the SAARC Charter. They sought peace, stability, amity, and progress including improving quality of life for all the involved nations. (en.wikipedia.org)

Despite these positive trends, there continue to be massive gaps in the degree of human development among countries. Comparing the lives of people in Norway, Australia and Switzerland (most developed countries) to those in Congo, Niger and the Central African Republic (least developed), astonishing disparities emerge across all measures of health, wealth, security and well-being. At 130, Indian rank and value of HDI is below than two BIMSTEC countries and below than two SAARC countries. Concerning to the World's average, again Indian HDI value is lower than the World. In this context, this paper reviewed and compared the HDI ranks and values between the BIMSTEC countries, SAARC countries and the World with India.

Objective: To compare and review the Indian HDI value and rank with BIMSTEC countries, SAARC countries and the World.

Methods:

Review with secondary data.

Observation and Discussion:

India continued to rank low in the Human Development Index (HDI), climbing just one notch to the 130th rank in the latest UNDP report on account of rise in life expectancy and per capita income. (PTI | New Delhi | Published: December 14, 2015)

India ranked 130 among 188 countries in Human Development Report 2015 released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The ranking is for the year 2014. As per the latest report, India's rank has moved from 131 to 130. India's HDI rank between 2009 and 2014 has raised six positions. (United Nations Development Programme, 2015). India's HDI value for 2014 is 0.609, which puts the country in the medium human development category, positioning it at 130 out of 188 countries and territories. Norway topped followed by Australia and Switzerland.

Gross National Income (GNI) per capita was USD 5,497 in 2014 up from USD 5,180 in 2013 and USD 1,255 in 1980. India's GNI per capita increased about 338 per cent between 1980 and 2014. However, the expected years of schooling is stagnant at 11.7 since 2011. Also, mean years of schooling at 5.4 has not changed since 2010. Between 1980 and 2014, India's life expectancy at birth increased by 14.1 years, while mean years of schooling increased by 3.5 years and expected years of schooling increased by 5.3 years. (Financial express)

Gender Development Index (GDI) value of India is 0.795 in 2014. The female HDI value for India is 0.525 in contrast with 0.660 for males. In Gender Inequality Index (GII) India rank at 130th position with value of 0.563 out of 155 countries in the 2014. India's HDI value increased from 0.362 to 0.609 between 1980 and 2014. It indicates an increase of 68.1% or an average annual increase of about 1.54%.

According to UNDP approach, the HDI is expressed as a figure ranging from 0 to 1. Categories are assigned to each country accordingly: "Low Human Development" (0 - 0.55), "Medium Human Development" (0.55 - 0.7), "High Human Development" (0.7 - 0.8), and "Very High Human Development" (0.8 - 1). The first Human Development Report was published in 1990. (www.dw.com/en/the-human-development-index-by-undp/a-18249812 Feb 11, 2015)

Countries are designated with 1 to 188 ranks because 188 Countries are participated in HDI calculation for 2014 which is released by UNDP in 2015. If the Country is nearer to 188, that rank is considered the worst and if it is nearer to 1 that is considered as the best in terms of human development.

When compared to the BIMSTEC Countries HDI; Sri Lanka is in first position and Thailand is in second position followed by India in third position. Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Myanmar are in fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh place respectively. Here the HDI rank of India is lower than Sri Lanka and Thailand (Table-1).

Concerning to the SAARC countries; Sri Lanka and Maldives are in first and second places respectively followed by India in third place. Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan are in fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth place respectively. Here the HDI rank of India is lower than Sri Lanka and Maldives (Table-1).

It is worth to note that Indian HDI rank and value are lower than World's average. Sri Lanka and Thailand among BIMSTEC countries & Sri Lanka and Maldives among SAARC countries are above the World's average in HDI value. All other countries in these two groups are below the World's average in HDI value (Table-1).

Table-1: Comparison of Indian HDI with BIMSTEC Countries, SAARC Countries and the World (The ranks and values are adopted from Human Development Report on HDI, UNDP; December 14, 2015).

| BIMSTEC Countries with India | | | |
|------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Country | HDI Rank | HDI Value | Human Development Range |
| Sri Lanka | 73 | 0.757 | High Human Development |
| Thailand | 93 | 0.726 | High Human Development |
| India | 130 | 0.609 | Medium Human Development |
| Bhutan | 132 | 0.605 | Medium Human Development |
| Bangladesh | 142 | 0.570 | Medium Human Development |
| Nepal | 145 | 0.548 | Low Human Development |
| Myanmar | 148 | 0.536 | Low Human Development |
| World's Average | 103/104 | 0.711 | High Human Development |
| SAARC Countries with India | | | |
| Sri Lanka | 73 | 0.757 | High Human Development |
| Maldives | 104 | 0.706 | High Human Development |
| India | 130 | 0.609 | Medium Human Development |
| Bhutan | 132 | 0.605 | Medium Human Development |
| Bangladesh | 142 | 0.570 | Medium Human Development |
| Nepal | 145 | 0.548 | Low Human Development |
| Myanmar | 148 | 0.536 | Low Human Development |
| Afghanistan | 171 | 0.465 | Low Human Development |
| World's Average | 103/104* | 0.711 | High Human Development |

***Note:** For the sake of the convenience for comparison, World rank is given basing on the HDI indicators of Surinam (0.714 value with 103th rank) and Maldives (0.706 value with 104th rank)

Conclusion:

HDI is one of the best tools to keep track of the level of development of a country, as it combines all major social and economic indicators that are responsible for economic development.

At 130, India ranks lower than Sri Lanka and Thailand among BIMSTEC countries and also lower than Sri Lanka and Maldives among SAARC countries in HDI. It is worth to note that Indian HDI rank and value are lower than World's

average as well. Sri Lanka and Thailand among BIMSTEC countries & Sri Lanka and Maldives among SAARC countries are above the World's average in HDI value. All other countries in these two groups are below the World's average in HDI value including India.

As India is a developing economy, it is showing good results year by year in the HDI value among the world. It is tough to get the best result in a year or period of a particular time as that development depends on various aspects. Especially health, literacy and the expectancy of life etc., are long term resulted features of a developing country may take a decade of time.

With 0.609 HDI value and 130th rank among 188 Countries, India is placed in medium human development category. To place it in high human development, lot to do.

Expected school of years is almost stagnant since 2011. Also, mean years of schooling has not changed since 2010. Focus should be shifted to poor performed areas of the Country in terms of education. Because of more population, GDP/GNP will not grow fast. Efforts should be made to stabilize the population to decrease the pressure on resources of the Country. Budget allocation should be increased to increase the life expectancy to the health sector with focus on inter-sectoral collaboration.

The analysis regarding the factors of the HDI can be possible through the social and the political factors and the decisions taken by them. Non-Governmental Organizations also should play key role to develop the Quality and Standard of Life of the Human Resources among the country along with other stake holders.

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